

Airport accessibility report 2018/19

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Executive summary

A record 3.7 million passengers were assisted at 31 UK airports between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. Since 2014 the number of passengers assisted increased by 49% while overall passenger numbers increased by 25%¹. The latest [UK Aviation Consumer Survey](#) found 47% of passengers who requested assistance for their last flight were doing so for the first time and 23% of passengers who said they had a disability thought they would fly more often in the next year. An increasing number of people know support is available, feel confident enough to use it and, as a result, more disabled and less mobile people than ever are travelling by air. Satisfaction is also high. CAA and airport surveys² of assistance service users found 3 out of 4 rated the service as good or very good. Further, the UK Aviation Consumer Survey found 79% of users who had requested assistance were satisfied with the service they received.

But there is room for improvement. The Consumer Survey suggests nearly a quarter of respondents who requested assistance said they did so because the airport environment was becoming more difficult to navigate. It also suggests a small, but important minority³ of passengers who requested assistance were not confident they would receive all the assistance they needed, or they would be treated with dignity and respect. Further, of those who describe themselves as having a disability or health condition that limits their day-to-day activity, over half said they find travelling by air difficult. Comments received from respondents to CAA and airport surveys of assistance service users continue to mention on occasion poor customer service, long waiting times and a lack of awareness of people's needs. The CAA takes this feedback very seriously and it demonstrates the importance of the CAA's continuing oversight of how well airports assist their passengers.

This year we have classified 14 airports as "very good", down from 16 airports in the 2017/18 report ([CAP1679](#)), 16 airports as "good" and one as "needs improvement". We are pleased

¹ Data submitted to the CAA from 31 airports.

² 8006 Survey responses from CAA survey plus responses from Cornwall Newquay, East Midlands, London Gatwick, London Heathrow, London Stansted, Manchester and Norwich's own surveys.

³ Around 1 in 15 passengers who requested assistance.

to be able to report for the first time since we began publishing these reports in 2016 we have classified no airport as “poor”.

Glasgow is the only airport to improve from good in the 2017/18 performance report to very good in this report. Both Glasgow and Edinburgh are the only airports with more than 9 million passengers a year to achieve a very good rating. Both airports continue to perform well, with significant investment and good management oversight driving their everyday performance.

Of the other major UK airports, we have classified London Stansted, London Luton, London Heathrow and London Gatwick as good. London Stansted and London Luton have improved the experience for disabled and less mobile passengers by speeding up the journey time through the airport on arrival from inbound flights. For London Heathrow and London Gatwick waiting times for assistance for passengers on arriving flights, particularly during busy periods, could be improved further, although we note London Gatwick has performed consistently well in this respect for the second half of the year.

Manchester has been classified as needs improvement. We were pleased with the response from senior management to the poor rating the airport received in last year’s report and we have seen progress in the second half of the reporting year (October to March), with the airport providing speedier assistance to passengers arriving on inbound flights. But overall, the performance for the year reflected a needs improvement rating.

Although it is outside the reporting year, recent events have stalled the progress that was made in the second half of the year. When the airport switched to a new service provider in April 2019, the transition did not go as well as planned, despite the CAA receiving assurances from both ABM, its new service provider, and the airport that preparations were thorough and well thought out. We have told senior management we expect immediate and effective action to be taken to reverse this recent decline in performance.